

Mourning Dove 10*, Chimney Swift 3, Common Flicker 2*, Downy Woodpecker 2*, Great Crested Flycatcher 3*, Eastern Wood Pewee 1*, Barn Swallow 8, Blue Jay 10+*, Carolina Chickadee 5*, Tufted Titmouse 3*, White-breasted Nuthatch 1*, Brown-headed Nuthatch 5*, House Wren 2*, Carolina Wren 2*, Mockingbird 7*, Gray Catbird 2*, Brown Thrasher 3*, American Robin 15+*, Wood Thrush 3*, Veery 1, Eastern Bluebird 8*, Golden-crowned Kinglet 1, Cedar Waxwing 4, Black-and-white Warbler 3*, Yellow Warbler 1, Pine Warbler 2*, Ovenbird 6*, Eastern Meadowlark 10+*, Orchard Oriole 2*, Common Grackle 25+*, Brown-headed Cowbird 5+, Scarlet Tanager 2*, Cardinal 15*, Indigo Bunting 1*, Rufous-sided Towhee 8*, Dark-eyed Junco 4, Grasshopper Sparrow 1 (heard only), and Song Sparrow 20+*.

Unfortunately, the brevity of my stay precluded searching for nests. Nevertheless, several of the occurrences warrant further comment. I found the Cooper's Hawks at Lenoir occupying a 5-mile stretch of lowland between two mountains, one of which has a forest station and hang-gliding point at the summit. The Pine Warblers were between Hickory (Catawba County) and Hudson along US 321-A (ca. 925 feet), and the Brown-headed Nuthatches were along US 321 in a grove of pines near a pottery shop on the way to Lenoir (ca. 1050 feet). Brown-headed Nuthatches were first reported nesting in Caldwell County in 1974 (Chat 38:66). The Orchard Orioles were at the same location as the nuthatches but on the other side of the road in deciduous shade trees. The Veery, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Dark-eyed Juncos were undoubtedly late transients at the elevations covered.

A Winter Bird Survey of Graham County, N.C.

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Early ornithological explorations of the North Carolina mountain region such as those conducted by William Brewster (1886) completely bypassed Graham County. It was not until 1944-1946 that Ganier, conducting research mainly at high-altitude (4000 to 5472 feet) sites, described the summer birds of the Unicoi Mountains, which constitute the western edge of the county (Ganier and Clebsch 1944, 1946). More recently (from 1968 to 1978), five breeding bird surveys have been conducted around the Fontana Village area by Mary Enloe, John Wright, and Harry E. LeGrand Jr. Additionally, several bird sightings have appeared in *The Chat*, representing observations made from the months of April through September. No published distributional records have appeared for the months from October to March.

Graham County has eight mountaintops rising above 4900 feet. Four major lakes are either partially or wholly within the county: Lake Santeetlah, Fontana Lake, Cheoah Lake, and Calderwood Lake. Of these, Santeetlah is the highest with an average surface elevation of 1920 feet, and Calderwood is lowest at 1080 feet. The proximity of these lakes to the Tennessee Valley suggests the possibility of wintering water birds straying from that prime waterfowl habitat.

From 29 through 31 December 1980, Owen McConnell and I surveyed winter birds in Graham County. We covered most of the county, including the high peaks of Hooper Bald, Oak Knob, and Big Huckleberry Knob in the western Unicoi Mountains; the length of Big Santeetlah Creek; the area surrounding Santeetlah Lake in the center of the county; Joyce Kilmer Memorial; Maple Springs Observation Point; the valleys of Cochran, Yellow, and Sweetwater Creeks; NC 28 from Stecoah to Fontana; US 129 from Robbinsville to Tapoco; Calderwood, Cheoah, and Fontana Lakes along the northern county boundary; and a portion of the Appalachian Trail in the Yellow Creek Mountains. Although light snow fell on the night of 30 December, the weather was

mostly clear to partly cloudy with overall temperatures for the three days ranging from about 34° to 41° F (as recorded in Robbinsville).

We recorded 834 individual birds representing 50 species: Pied-billed Grebe 1, Black Duck 5, Sharp-shinned Hawk 2, Red-tailed Hawk 1, American Kestrel 4, Bobwhite 21, Mourning Dove 3, Screech Owl 1, Great Horned Owl 4, Barred Owl 1, Belted Kingfisher 3, Common Flicker 1, Pileated Woodpecker 11, Red-bellied Woodpecker 3, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 4, Downy Woodpecker 10, Eastern Phoebe 2, Blue Jay 12, Common Crow 58, Carolina Chickadee 59, Tufted Titmouse 13, White-breasted Nuthatch 7, Red-breasted Nuthatch 12, Brown Creeper 2, Winter Wren 1, Carolina Wren 17, Mockingbird 1, Brown Thrasher 1, American Robin 3, Hermit Thrush 2, Eastern Bluebird 20, Golden-crowned Kinglet 37, Ruby-crowned Kinglet 1, Water Pipit 1, Starling 37, House Sparrow 4, Rusty Blackbird 1, Cardinal 19, Evening Grosbeak 3, Purple Finch 42, Pine Siskin 15, American Goldfinch 34, Red Crossbill 6, Rufous-sided Towhee 16, Dark-eyed Junco 215, Field Sparrow 23, White-throated Sparrow 38, Fox Sparrow 5, Swamp Sparrow 7, and Song Sparrow 47.

The Water Pipit, regarded as a rare winter visitor in the North Carolina mountains (Potter et al. 1980), was found along the broad, unvegetated shoreline of Santeetlah Lake, which had been drawn down approximately 30 feet. The Pied-billed Grebe was on the lake itself, whereas the five Black Ducks were feeding in a small, shallow recess of the otherwise deep Cheoah Lake. The Brown Thrasher, Mockingbird, and Rusty Blackbird were noteworthy, if only for the fact that just one of each could be found. They were at elevations slightly below 2000 feet. The most abundant bird was the Dark-eyed Junco, which was commonest in the valleys but could be found in small flocks along roadcuts at the higher elevations. A few were present even on the tops of the highest balds. Other birds present on the balds were the Carolina Chickadee and Downy Woodpecker. The most frequently seen woodpecker in the county was the Pileated. Its apparent numerical edge over the Downy may be due to its noisy and conspicuous habits. Pileated Woodpeckers called more frequently and certainly louder than Downy Woodpeckers when both were present for comparison. Because the 1980-81 winter provided a substantial influx of northern finches in the Carolinas, it is not surprising that Evening Grosbeaks, Purple Finches, Pine Siskins, and Red Crossbills were seen. The six Red Crossbills were in Pitch Pines bordering the West Buffalo Creek arm of Lake Santeetlah. In general, both the number of species and the number of individual birds declined with increasing elevation.

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